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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001028

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TAGS: PREL PGOV IZ

SUBJECT: AYAD ALLAWI: WE ARE ALL IN THIS BOAT TOGETHER

REF: BAGHDAD 512

Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

**¶1.** (S/NF) Summary. Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi told PolCouns on April 2 that re-establishing peace and stability following the violence in Basrah will be critical to Iraq's long-term stability. Allawi said the GOI is not doing enough to reach out to its Arab neighbors, which is one strategy for reducing Iranian influence in Iraq. Engagement with the Sadrist, he noted, will be key to bringing about national reconciliation. He voiced concern that the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) will face a split between the Sadrist and Da'wa party. Allawi complained that accusations from the Ministry of Interior linking him to the terrorist group Jund al-Samma (Soldiers of Heaven), have not been retracted by PM Maliki, despite intervention from President Jalal Talabani. Regarding Iran, he cautioned that other GOI leaders have engaged Iranian officials too much in the past and unless PM Maliki makes a concerted effort to distance himself, Iran will continue to fill the vacuum in the current leadership in Iraq. End summary.

PEACE NEEDED FOLLOWING CRISIS IN BASRAH

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**¶2.** (S/NF) Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi told PolCouns that achieving peace and stability in Iraq following the crisis in Basrah is paramount. He supports economic assistance as a form of reconciliation in the South and encourages the GOI to be more actively engaged with the political blocs to bring about national reconciliation. "There are two sides to the coin," he said. Militias and Iraqi institutions are giving weapons to Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). Also, the police are not able to do their job and lack the strength needed to push back. The Prime Minister needs to now focus on building stability, he said, and this message needs to come from others in the GOI as well. He pledged to use his upcoming engagements with VP Adil Abdul Mahdi, DPM Barham Saleh, and KRG President Massoud Barzani to advance these efforts.

BUILDING RELATIONS WITH ARAB NEIGHBORS

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**¶3.** (S/NF) Allawi noted building stronger relations with Arab neighbors is one way to counter the Iranian influence on Shi'a militias such as JAM. "The GOI should really be meeting with policymakers in the region," he noted. He encouraged stronger relations with Kuwait and Saudi, and Algeria among others. The GOI and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is not being assertive enough, he stressed. Allawi also highlighted his role as a "bridge to peace" between the Turks and KRG President Barzani during the PKK crisis.

RECONCILING WITH THE SADRISTS

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¶ 14. (S/NF) Allawi noted some legitimate Sadrist are willing to talk to the USG. "I am encouraging them to talk to you," he said. The USG can play a catalytic role in bringing about national reconciliation, he stressed. At the same time, Allawi warned that there is now a cloud of mistrust among political players that will continue to fester as the date for provincial elections draws closer. Allawi said he will "spare no effort" to bring about national reconciliation and democracy in Iraq. He also offered to provide in-depth assessments of the situation in Basrah and Nasiriyah. He highlighted the growing split within UIA between Dawa and the Sadrist unless national reconciliation efforts succeed.

#### ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ALLAWI STILL PROBLEMATIC

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¶ 15. (S/NF) Allawi said that the Ministry of the Interior's allegations linking him to the terrorist group "Jund al-Samma" (Soldiers of Heaven) are still problematic for him and hindering his political agenda. He stressed PM Maliki has failed to retract these accusations despite intervention by his party members and USG efforts (reftel). "PM Maliki should apologize," he said. PolCouns responded that President Talabani promised to address this situation with Maliki and thought this problem was behind him.

#### IRAN IS FILLING THE VACUUM OF LEADERSHIP

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¶ 16. (S/NF) Allawi said he fears that Iran is filling the vacuum of strong leadership in Iraq. He expressed dismay that Iraq's leaders such as President Talabani, VP Adil Abdul

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Mahdi, and DPM Barham Saleh have had meetings in the past with the Iranian leadership and in particular with IRGC representatives. The PM's strong ties to the Iranians -- instead of the Arabs -- is a key weakness of the Iraqi Government. "Maliki needs to come clean on Iran," said Allawi. He cautioned that the GOI will be unable to gain Arab support in pushing back on Iranian influence if PM Maliki and the GOI does not distance itself from militias and sectarianism. "We are all in one boat together," said Allawi. "If we sink, it will be all of us."

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